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## THE OLD NATIONAL ROAD.

*As Described by George Cary Eggleston.*

THE plan was to make the National road a Broad one, after the manner of the Romans, whose empire-building methods the statesmen of that time had minutely studied. The roadbed was sixty-six feet wide. The gradients were so low that a pair of horses might haul a very heavy load over them without difficulty. Every creek was well bridged, and every brook culverted, while the surface of the road was made smooth with broken and pulverized stone.

This was in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia. When the National road had crossed the Ohio and entered the wilderness, a far less costly system of construction was adopted.

The road from Cumberland to Wheeling had cost six thousand dollars a mile, without counting the cost of bridges, from the Ohio forward into the West, about three thousand dollars a mile—and much less as the road advanced—sufficed.

On the eastern division the road was paved six inches deep in broken stone; every little brook was bridged by a stone culvert, and every mile of the road was drained by two deep ditches, one on each side of it. West of the Ohio the only work done was to clear away the timber, grub up the stumps and dig ditches. There was no thought of a stone coating to the roadway, and no thought of anything else except to open a track over which wagons might be hauled through the mud.

Here and there in creek bottom lands the road was corduroyed. That is to say, timbers were laid upon its surface to keep the wagons from sinking hopelessly into the soil.

In this way, year by year the National road was extended westward, and as it was extended, the travel over it increased.

From Wheeling, in Virginia, it stretched in very nearly straight line westward, through Columbus, Ohio, Indianapolis and Terre Haute, Indiana, to Vandalia, then the capital of Illinois.